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**REMARKS
BY
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA
“AMERICA’S PARTNERSHIP WITH BANGLADESH:
BROADER, DEEPER, STRONGER THAN EVER”
THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION
LEHRMAN AUDITORIUM
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Good morning ... and thanks for the invitation to come back to the Heritage Foundation.

November 19, 2011 ...

... seems like yesterday when my wife Grace and I arrived in Dhaka to take up our new assignment as America’s ambassador to Bangladesh ...

We were so tired ... Grace got off first ... and I followed behind, dragging a huge bag ... it was so heavy, but I dragged it through the terminal and thumped it down the stairs and into the lounge, where I held a press conference. Just as the press event was ending, a journalist queried, “What do you have in that big bag?” “Oh,” I responded, “that is my mandate ... my mandate to broaden, to deepen, to strengthen America’s partnership with Bangladesh ... and the sky is the limit.”

Perhaps, you wonder why my mandate is so big ... well, the answer is simple ... Bangladesh is big ... the world’s eighth largest country ... the world’s third largest Muslim-majority country ... Bangladesh is a country of deep strategic importance to America. Since I spoke of America’s interests in Bangladesh during my last time here, I will give a quick review of why Bangladesh matters to America.

Bangladesh is a moderate, tolerant country and valued security partner that offers a viable alternative to violent extremism in a troubled part of the world ...

As Bangladesh bolsters relations with its neighbors, it fosters greater regional stability ...

As a leading contributor to international peace support operations, Bangladesh sustains global peace ...

Bangladesh is critical to achieving global food security for the world's surging population ...

We are important trade and investment partners, creating jobs in both countries.

America believes a democratic Bangladesh, a Bangladesh that respects its citizens' human rights will be a stronger partner for us ...

America seeks to help Bangladesh cope with natural disasters, adding another 130 cyclone shelters to the 550 we have already built, and we partner with Bangladesh, as it thinks the unthinkable of responding to a major earthquake.

In sum, America's interests in Bangladesh are considerable : countering terrorism and violent extremism, fostering regional security, sustaining global peace, achieving global food security, expanding trade and investment, promoting democracy and respect for human rights, and helping Bangladesh cope with disasters, especially earthquakes.

To advance these many interests, America promotes a Bangladesh that is peaceful, secure, prosperous, healthy and democratic.

In this context US Mission Dhaka endeavors to broaden, deepen, strengthen the partnership between America and Bangladesh ... with great success.

When last I came to Heritage, I spoke of Secretary Clinton's May 2012 visit, when she signed an agreement to establish a Partnership Dialogue that provides an annual high level review of the partnership to acknowledge successes and identify where more could be done. The third annual Partnership Dialogue is slated for late summer/early fall in Washington, where delegations headed by the Undersecretary for Political Affairs and the Bangladeshi Foreign Secretary will assess the relationship, identifying course corrections, as necessary.

Complementing this strategic review, the two countries instituted a Security Dialogue to assess security aspects of the partnership. The third annual Security Dialogue in April gave a comprehensive review of security considerations around the region and of prospects for deepening our security partnership. In October, the third annual bilateral military-military dialogue in Hawaii will hammer out a schedule of military training and other engagement for the next five years

This year we added a new annual bilateral engagement to the mix. In April, we held the first ever Trade and Investment Cooperation Framework Agreement meeting. TICFA is quite simple: it provides a forum for the two countries to meet at least once a year to identify obstacles to increasing trade and investment and how to overcome those obstacles. Our maiden TICFA meeting was a good success in launching this new forum. Each side shared clearly its views on how to increase bilateral trade and investment.

To recap, America and Bangladesh over the past two and one-half years have created a broad, comprehensive framework that institutionalizes our partnership. As Secretary Clinton observed

during her 2012 visit, the relationship is so important, that it must have its own enduring framework for engagement.

Our security partnership has four key elements: countering violent extremism, enhancing maritime security, supporting international peacekeeping, and advancing humanitarian assistance and disaster response. We jointly have made much progress on these fronts. America contributed a cutter to the Bangladesh Navy, the Somudra Joy, which at 378 feet is the largest vessel in the Bangladesh Navy. Bangladesh has put the vessel to good work, providing disaster relief to the Philippines and joining the search for Malaysian Air Flight 370. Bangladeshi success with this vessel is so great that I hope America will provide a second cutter; I expect a decision soon.

We also help Bangladesh build its own Navy Seals. We have provided the Navy and Bangladesh Coast Guard 25 foot and 38 foot ultra-fast boats, the fastest on the Bay of Bengal. Using these enhanced capabilities, Bangladesh has slashed robberies in the Bay by 70%, reduced insurance rates by 40%, and had Chittagong removed from the international listing of high-threat ports.

America and Bangladesh also partner with the First Para Commanders and the Border Guard Bangladesh to enhance Bangladesh's ability to secure its land borders. Increasingly, along both its land and maritime borders, Bangladesh now better protects against trafficking of drugs, arms and people, better stops the movement of terrorists, and better protects its fish and other economic assets in the Bay.

The recent signings of MOUs on counterterrorism and drug trafficking portend deeper cooperation.

Another critical element of our partnership is helping Bangladesh prepare for an earthquake; the Bangladesh government is imagining the unimaginable as it strategizes on responding to a devastating earthquake. A joint major training exercise later this year will test emergency communications and preparations for utilizing aid from other countries. As a next step, I hope the government will establish a disaster response center to enable decision makers to control rescue and recovery efforts.

Our partnership has helped Bangladesh progress toward achieving Millennium Development Goals for slashing maternal and child-under-five mortality, and enabling Bangladeshis to have the family size they want. We support Bangladeshi efforts to achieve food security. Last year, we worked with 2.2 million farmers to use new methods for utilizing urea, thereby increasing yields while reducing fertilizer costs; we helped 350 thousand farmers use new saline-tolerant, drought-tolerant, or flood-tolerant seed varieties. We partner with Bangladesh to adapt to the effects of global climate change. There is so much more to tell about our development partnership, but the clock moves on and so must I.

One of the great strengths of our partnership is people-to-people engagement. I continue my quest to visit all 64 districts to learn more about this wondrous country and to fostering connections between America and Bangladeshis. I must be having success, as Bangladeshi applicants for non-immigrant visas have increased five-fold over the past year and a half! This

includes hundreds of Bangladeshis who visit the United States each year on professional, academic and cultural exchanges. In the US, I continue to reach out to Bangladeshi-Americans to keep them engaged in Bangladesh, most recently I was in Miami. I have a four-part message for them: explore investing in Bangladesh, advise that a growing number is taking; mentor emerging Bangladeshi entrepreneurs, and we have created a new program to hook up Bangladeshi-American mentors with budding Bangladeshi entrepreneurs; donate to Bangladesh ... we have set up an online portal that allows Bangladeshi-Americans to receive a US tax deduction when they donate to vetted Bangladeshi NGOs; and expand the number of Bangladeshis studying in the US. That's my message to the prosperous Bangladeshi-American community.

America's relationship with Bangladesh ... like all relationships ... has areas of concern.

Allegations of involvement of Bangladeshi security forces in extrajudicial killings and disappearances are disturbing. I raise these concerns with the government, making clear that such activities must stop, and I urge the government to hold accountable those responsible for these actions.

The plight of the Rohingya refugees is both a humanitarian tragedy and a major obstacle to regional integration. I am pleased that the government has developed a comprehensive strategy on this issue, and we will continue to support government and international efforts to meet the refugees' basic humanitarian needs; we will continue to urge Bangladesh to provide refuge to those fleeing persecution.

A pillar of Bangladesh's success is its vast, vibrant, varied civil society, which contributes mightily to the nation's socio-economic development. We urge the government of Bangladesh to ensure the continued independence and inventiveness of civil society. We urge the government to ensure the integrity and continued success of the Grameen Bank and to preserve its unique governance structure.

We urge the government and opposition parties to engage in dialogue to find a way to hold free, fair, and credible elections that reflect the will of the people.

A key element of our partnership is supporting Bangladesh's efforts to transform the apparel sector to ensure that the country never again experiences another Rana Plaza, that it never again experiences another Tazreen Fashions fire.

I believe Bangladesh is on the road to bringing the apparel sector to international standards in terms of fire safety, factory structure soundness and respect for workers' rights.

I believe President Obama's decision last June to suspend Bangladesh's GSP privileges is an important driving force in effecting this transformation. The Sustainability Compact agreed last July by Bangladesh, the US and the EU codifies Bangladesh's commitment to undertake measures identified in the Action Plan for restoring Bangladesh's GSP privileges in the US. Additionally, the brands ... the buyers ... for the first time in history are contributing nearly \$100 million to undertake inspections in their over 2000 source factories. Many have also made

available large amounts of resources for revolving loans to help factory owners undertake needed remedial actions to bring their facilities to standard. Meanwhile, Canada, Netherlands and the UK contributed funds to enable the ILO to undertake inspections in the rest of the factories. The ILO has launched the largest Better Work program in its history with the goal of bringing as many as 800 factories to standard. America and other donors are engaged; many workers have undertaken to organize real unions, and the government has recognized 150 of them over the past year and a half; many owners support deep change in the sector; and the government has given strong leadership to these efforts. Of course, there are some owners and others who oppose change, but I am hopeful that in the end this transformation will make Brand Bangladesh a Premium Brand, a Preferred Brand, the number one brand in the world.

There is so much more to tell about the U.S.-Bangladesh partnership, but I hope that I have made my point that this partnership is now broader, deeper and stronger than ever. As I look back over the past two and one-half years, I am pleased with the great progress America and Bangladesh have made in fostering our partnership. As I look forward, I am confident that America and Bangladesh will continue to broaden, to deepen to strengthen this partnership to the benefit of the people of both nations.

Thank you.

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**As prepared for delivery*